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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Releases School Classifications; 62 percent of R.I. Schools are High Performing Board of Regents Commendation Awarded to 66 Schools

NORTH PROVIDENCE - Results from the latest round of school-performance classifications show that 62 percent of the elementary and middle schools in the state are high performing.

The classifications show that 71 percent of the elementary and middle schools in the state met all of the targets established by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The classifications, which Governor Donald L. Carcieri released this morning (September 21), are based on the results of state tests in mathematics, reading, and writing administered last October in all elementary and middle schools.

"The results show that most our elementary and middle schools are stepping up to the challenges of meeting the higher standards that we have set under the No Child Left Behind Act. The fact that no additional schools are facing sanctions demonstrates the progress we are making," Governor Carcieri said. "As a state, however, we are concerned about those schools that are failing to reach these targets. We will continue to work with the teachers, administrators, and students in these schools so they, too, can be part of the success that we're seeing in many areas of the state."

"I'm pleased to note that this year 66 schools have been classified as Regents' Commended Schools, a higher number than ever before," said James A. DiPrete, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "These schools are recognized for the exceptionally high achievement or for their substantial improvement. They serve as models and examples for all schools in Rhode Island."

"These classifications present further evidence that there really are two Rhode Islands," said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Our suburban and urban-ring schools have done very well, with many high-performing schools. But all of the schools classified as making insufficient progress are located in our five highest-poverty districts. We must continue to work to improve the performance of all students, particularly English-language learners, students with disabilities, and students in our urban schools."

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As the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced last month, 23 elementary and middle schools have missed targets for multiple years and will therefore face some form of sanction, such as providing parents the option to choose another school, offering supplemental educational services, or undergoing restructuring. This year, no additional schools joined the list of those facing sanctions.

There are 54 elementary and middle schools that missed at least one target for the first time this year. These schools are in danger of facing sanctions under the terms of the NCLB if they miss targets again next year.

The classifications released today are the first set of classifications based on the new state assessments developed in partnership with New Hampshire and Vermont through the New England Common Assessment Program. Students were tested in grades 3 through 8; previously, elementary- and middle-school students had been tested in only grades 4 and 8.

Because the assessments are new, year-to-year comparisons are difficult. Elementary and middle Schools were not classified last year. In 2004, 80 percent of the elementary and middle schools met all of their federal targets. Since that time, the annual targets for all schools have been raised to a higher level – the first in a series of incremental steps that will raise all targets to 100-percent proficiency by the year 2014.

To be classified as moderately performing or high performing, schools must meet the English language arts and mathematics targets for the school as a whole and for each of 8 groups of students within the school (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White students; students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and English-language learners). The targets are the same for all groups. Schools are held accountable for each group in which there are 45 or more students in the tested grades.

The classifications were released at the Dr. Edward A. Ricci Middle School, which was one of five high-performing schools in North Providence.

“It is a privilege to have the 2006 School-Performance Classifications released here at the Ricci School, one of Rhode Island’s newest and most state-of-the-art middle schools,” said A. Ralph Mollis, Mayor of North Providence. “I am excited to learn that out of eight elementary and middle schools in our town, all of them have met their targets, with five classified as high performing. This is a great accomplishment of which we all should be proud, and I commend our School Department, faculty, and children.”

High-school classifications, based on tests administered last March, will be released in November.

A complete list of the classifications of the elementary and middle schools, as well as documents explaining the classification process are posted on the RIDE Web site, www.ride.ri.gov - under “2006 School-Performance Classifications.”

